THE WAY OF THE CROSS

BY
V. DOROSHEVITCH

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE
BY
STEPHEN GRAHAM

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE Way of the Cross is probably the first piece of Russian war literature translated into English. It is a terribly poignant impression of the fugitives on the road after the great German invasion of Russia in August and September, 1915. It is written by Doroshevitch, a famous Russian journalist, and was contributed to the *Russkoe Slovo* in October, 1915. Doroshevitch went from Moscow to meet the oncoming flood of refugees, and he went through to the rear of the Russian army, and came back with this extraordinary picture.

At first he met the sparse survivors and first comers, those who were furthest

ahead in the procession; afterwards they came thicker and thicker till they were a great moving wall. He tells how they camped in the forests, how they died by the way, how they put up their crosses by the side of the road, how they sold their horses and abandoned their carts, how they starved, how they suffered. The words speak for themselves.

Doroshevitch is chiefly famous for his work on *Sakhalin*, but he is a very popular modern writer, and very powerful, using an ironic pen. He writes constantly on the *Russkoe Slovo*, and is a great favourite. Russians buy this interesting paper even for him alone, and read his articles and *feuilletons* aloud. He has an extraordinary journalistic style, all short sentences, short paragraphs, word-paragraphs, dashes, marks of interrogation. Our own writers should find him interesting. Scores

of Russian journalists imitate him and endeavour to write in his way—not always with success. I have been collecting his articles for some time with a view to publishing a volume of his in our Russian Library with Sologub and Kuprin and other living Russians. But here is this extraordinary document—*The Way of the Cross*. I felt directly I saw it that it must be translated and given to the British public, sent to the trenches, and read by all of us, if only that we may realize the temper of Russia and what the Russians have suffered.

Doroshevitch is a liberal and a progressive, but he is a real Russian and a Christian. This breathless, almost desperate story yet breathes a tender love toward the individual, and there is that Christian mysticism that can see in the white crosses over the fugitives' graves "Georgian crosses on

the breast of the suffering earth." The Georgian is the Russian equivalent of our Victoria Cross, given for valour and self-sacrifice.

STEPHEN GRAHAM.

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The Way of the Cross

IN 1812 Moscow made a funeral pyre for herself, and burned

— For Russia's sake.

A hundred years have passed.

And the red glare of Moscow's fire has paled.

The Moscow of those days!

A wooden city.

The burning of it was appalling.

The ground burned under the feet of the Napoleonic soldiers: even the roadways of Moscow were made of wood at that time.

But now!

More than ten provinces have been laid waste by the enemy.

Millions of people have become beggars.

And have fled.

From the places of their birth to the far centre of Russia stretches the way of the Cross for these people.

And on this way, as on that other way —of Golgotha, are places, there are:

—Stopping places,

Where the people faint under the burden of the Cross.

Bobruisk. Dovsk. Roslavl.

These are names full of affliction.

These stopping places.

Especially:

—The memory of Roslavl is terrible.

I

THE RIVER

ON the roadway, outside Podolsk, a sentry, an old man, said to me with a smile.

—All Russia is on parade.

And he raised the barrier to allow a motor-car to pass.

—One province comes after another.

After some hours on the road you begin to distinguish one province from another.

There goes the province of Holm.

You recognize it by the way the peasant women do their hair.

They cut a "fringe" and let it show on their foreheads, pulling it out from under their kerchiefs,

As our ladies wore their hair twenty years ago.

These are:

—The White Mountain people.

The peasant women of the White Mountain district, whom the women of other provinces cannot tolerate, but despise them for these same "fringes."

—The plain-haired women.

The Holm people came before any of the others, they have been longer on the road and are more upset than all the rest.

Their peasant women are quarrelsome, they look about them ill-naturedly, and for every little nothing they raise hysterical cries.

It's evident that they're upset in the very depths of their souls.

Their nerves are all unstrung.

See, approaching slowly, in their reddish sheepskin coats with fringes of wool hanging from the cuffs of their sleeves,

come the people from the province of Grodno.

You can recognize the Grodno people by their carts. The carts have coverings made of checked and striped material stretched over a basket-work frame.

This homespun material is used for the festival dresses of the peasant women.

In the province of Grodno the peasant women make such cloth.

They offer it at sixty copecks an arshin at the relief points on the road:

Even in the extremity of their need they will not part with it for less than sixty copecks.

And with this precious material they now cover their carts!

All goes to ruin!

This is a twice-humbled people.

—First of all, good man, there came through our province fugitives from other places. They ruined us: dug up our

potatoes, rooted up our cabbages, took off the hay, and carried away the unground grain in their carts. And as soon as this had happened we ourselves had to be on the move!—complain the peasants.

See, here come the peasants of Lublin and Lomzha provinces. They wear long white sheepskin coats with the wool showing at the cuffs of their sleeves, with broad shawl-like collars of black sheepskin, and with a beautiful ornamentation of coloured threads. They wear four-cornered caps with pompons on the corners.

Long moustaches, and shaven chins, overgrown and scrubby.

A quiet, courteous, gentle folk.

Their women are arrayed in specially sumptuous fur coats.

The sleeves, the pockets, and the waists are all adorned with embroidery in coloured thread.

Now all these are dirty, all are covered with a thick layer of dust, they are torn and ragged, but you can see that they were once beautiful, ornamental, and in themselves signs of wealth.

And that not very long ago.

—It's the third month!

—We've been journeying nine weeks!

—Seven weeks since we left!

The peasants answer wearily in reply to the question:

—Have you been long on the road?

A whole eternity!

—I can't make it out—said one of the fugitives to me. He was serving as a soldier, and used even such phrases as "the masses."

—I can't make it out: either my home was all a dream, or I've gone out of my mind now, and God knows when I shall understand. My home burnt, cattle drowned in the river, no little wife, she

died on the road; my two children also died and we buried them by the wayside and put crosses over the graves. I've got one son left and one horse. That's all we are in the world. Is it possible that I am the same man as I was?

He had the common appearance of a fugitive—a two-horse cart with a single shaft and canvas tilt.

When you meet the first party of fugitives upon the road you think that they're gipsies.

The populations of whole provinces have become gipsies, and in the month of October are leading a nomad life on the road and in the forests.

It is necessary to form some estimate of the greatness of their unexampled trial.

To a cart that should be drawn by two horses one often sees only one.

The other has fallen, or has been sold by the way.

No harness of any kind, only a horse-collar.

And that lonely horse in the shafts has the air of an orphan, and imparts that air to the whole conveyance.

By the side of the horse walks the peasant or his wife, turn by turn.

They only go on foot in the mornings.

—To get warm.

In the mornings there are five degrees of frost in the fields.

But they all are travelling in their carts.

All of them have sore feet and many are lame.

Inside the carts, under feather beds, under old clothes and rags, sit or lie five or seven human beings.

The carts are crowded with people.

The little horses find it hard to draw the people and their luggage.

What is in the carts?

—We only brought the bedding!

—We only managed to bring the linen! these are the answers you hear.

You meet the very strangest cartloads.

They sometimes carry—layers of iron.

—The roof!

It was the most valued possession.

—Their cottage had an iron roof!

When they were forced to flee, they took this most valued thing and carried it they knew not whither.

Why?

—It was the most valuable.

At the sides of the carts the peasants have slung their kitchen utensils, as gipsies do.

It cuts one to the heart to see these remains of what was lately—only yesterday—opulence and sufficiency.

One often sees enamelled ware

Enamelled kettles, frying-pans, basins.

Suddenly comes a cart with a watering-pot fastened at the side.

Just one watering-pot remains from the whole garden and vegetable plot!

Sewing machines stick out from the sides of the carts.

It's as if there had been a fire.

A fire in which all has been destroyed, and the people have caught up

—The most precious things!

Often, behind the carts, instead of spare wheels as in the majority of cases —is tied on a Viennese chair.

They had been proud of this chair.

—It had been the chair for guests.

—They didn't get along anyhow in their home. They had Viennese chairs. Theirs wasn't an *izba*.

And now, when they sleep in the woods and travel slowly along the road, in cold and hunger, they carry these chairs with them as:

—Their most precious possession.

Under the cart sometimes dogs are

tied, and they run along there as they can.

They're tied up so that they won't get run over by the relief cars that come swiftly along.

How moving and how instant in its appeal is this enormous and silent procession! How it grips one's heart!

The procession moving no one knows whither.

Into the unknown.

Silently, above all.

The over-wearied horses do not shy when motor-cars pass them. They do not even prick up their ears.

And the dogs don't bark.

The people in the carts do not talk.

—They have said all they've got to say.

They move like grey shadows, like the dead.

The peasant women are silent.

Even the children do not cry.

At the relief points, where thousands of people are gathered together, you are impressed by the silence.

What a silent country it is!

You can go for tens and for hundreds of versts—and still meet an almost uninterrupted stream of grey carts

Like a series of spectres.

And silent, silent, silent.

Nothing but hopeless boredom and grief in their eyes.

Weary and indifferent faces, as of convicts being marched along the road

And only by the new white wooden crosses along the side of the road can you see how much suffering has silently passed there.

A river of suffering has coursed along.

At the medical stations the doctors tear their hair.

—What can we do? Confess our helplessness? · Numbers come to us suffering

from rheumatism. From rheumatism in its most acute form. What can we do? What help can we give these people who must spend their nights in the forests?

There are many cases of typhoid fever

And at the medical stations on the road the doctors give a sigh of relief and exclaim

—Thank God, no typhus.

Dysentery is raging.

—It is astonishing, how many are suffering from dysentery!—and that also is a matter for despair.

Nearly everybody has bronchitis.

Many cases of acute pneumonia.

Among the children, scarlatina.

Scores are suffering from bruises and blisters, and have their feet bandaged up.

So blistered, that it's impossible to walk.

Feet scorched from the bonfires near which the people have slept at night in the forest.

The doctors work as hard as they can.

They work with superhuman energy.

But how can one cope with elemental calamity?

And it is truly elemental.

What can we do? said a doctor to me. Yesterday I had an experience. Side by side. A man was dying, a woman gave birth to a child.

II

THE CHANNEL

THE peasants and peasant women—in war time the village is a woman's country—come out and look at the oncoming fugitives with great curiosity.

—Not our faces. Not our caps. They're not dressed like us, they don't speak plainly.

The peasant women look at them closely.

—Where do they come from?

Everyone is rapturous concerning:

—The people from below Riga.

That is how the peasants designate the German colonists from the Baltic provinces.

They came "with the autumn," while it was yet warm.

They did not hurry themselves. They took care of their fine horses.

They came in large, fine, spacious covered carts.

With all their household goods.

In the provinces of Moscow, Kaluga, Smolensk, Mogilef, and Minsk, all the peasants speak of them with envy:

—You see where these people come from. From below Riga.

They speak with envy of the people from Holm province.

—Especially of those who came first.

They managed to get away in the warm weather.

When there was something on the road for the cattle to eat.

They drove their herds with them.

—There was something to look at. What fine cows!

The peasants also approve of the Grodno folk.

—They have fine horses. No comparison with ours.

The peasant women especially admire the people from Lomzha and Lublin, and cry out:

—What fine clothes! They're dressed up like butterflies! It's beautiful to look at them!

When one sees them first they create a strange impression.

Suddenly amidst the grey line of fugitives are seen—bright patches.

Peasant women come along in bright new shawls.

Ornamental, sumptuous.

With such tired and mournful faces and yet dressed in their festival clothes.

This is the most dreadful of all.

These people have come to the very last.

Everything else has been worn out, it has all gone to rags, changed to tatters.

And at the last stopping place the peasant woman has taken out of her box or from the bottom of some little tub, her best clothes which she has hidden there till then.

The very last.

A ragged fugitive has still something left.

But these well-dressed people have nothing more.

All has gone.

Soon they'll have nothing more to put on.

The farther you go, the more you meet of these

—Peasants in their best clothes.

The people of the villages say

—She's put on her last skirt. Yet you can see what sort of people they were.

And our village folk say, enviously:

—They've put the horses in by twos. How smartly they trot! It's evident they've been well fed. Not like ours.

The villagers are, above all, practical.

The peasants and their wives have bought up the fugitives' cattle.

Ask the peasant women who guard the flocks—the women do this work now:

—Have you bought any cows from the fugitives?

Every one of them will answer:

—Why not? There goes one of their cows, there's another, there's another.

They're not willing to talk about the price they paid.

—How much did we give? They were dear. Thirty roubles.

But their neighbours, who have not bought cows for themselves, will tell you:

—It's impossible for her to pay such a price! She ought to say outright that she practically got them for nothing.

The villages round about make a lot of money through the fugitives.

They do nothing but bake enormous quantities of black bread and cart it to the relief points.

At a rouble and a half, at a rouble seventy, even at two roubles the pood.

Unheard-of prices!

And there are places through which pass 12,000 fugitives a day.

There is some fear that the villagers have given themselves up too much to bread making.

Will they have enough for themselves by and by?

Has the harvest been so good as to allow them to feed not only themselves but hundreds of thousands of others?

The towns, villages, and hamlets along the road are filled with terror.

—The fugitives will eat us all up!

—They're like locusts.

Utterly worn out, the fugitives turn in from the highway and make their camp in the forest at the very edge of the road.

They stay there for days, for a week, upon occasion for two weeks.

They chop wood and make fires.

They cut it down, not asking

—Whose is it?

They cut wood indiscriminately, continuously.

When they have absolutely made a space bare, they move on farther.

They eat into the forest.

And behind them they leave the fresh-hewn stumps of trees, the bare glade, the black traces of the bonfires.

They trample down everything.

No grass remains, not a bit of hay, no leaves from the trees which they've cut down, no branches—the ground is covered only with a sort of grey dust, with a litter of light rubbish.

All around is a stench from the filth they've left behind.

Sometimes—indeed often—by the side of the road they leave a new-made grave marked by a white, roughly cut wooden cross.

As you go along the road you can see the forest smoking here, there, and in every direction.

These are the bonfires of the fugitives.

At night the fugitives wander about in the neighbourhood.

They dig up the potatoes, take all the cabbages, drag off stacks of corn waiting to be ground, and piles of hay.

At some places where the fugitives have been out and foraged, the people complain:

—Lord a' mercy! The oats which were being brought to us have fallen into the hands of the fugitives on the road. So much oats was sent, and we have the

invoice for it. But only half arrives. The fugitives have stopped the wagons on the road and taken away what they wanted.

At one of the points on the road I met a substantial local farmer.

He was selling unground oats.

No dearer than five copecks above the price of hay a pood.

—It doesn't matter how cheap it is, cried he in despair. The fugitives rob the wagons all the same.

At another point I was told of a local landowner:

—He goes about with a revolver. The fugitives have dug up more than a hundred acres of potatoes belonging to him.

There's no stopping people who've come to the end of things.

Near Gomel a by-road goes over a ravine, and the fugitives pulled the bridge to bits.

For their bonfires.

In the towns and villages you hear of country squires who have fled by night with their families from the coming of the fugitives.

You hear of some who have asked for a guard of soldiers.

—If only for the night. Entirely at our expense.

Their fear is quite understandable, when at night-time a great crowd overtakes you.

But no personal assaults of any kind have been heard of.

However, regarding property, no one asks:

—Whose?

You understand that by the carts of the fugitives.

One is full of wood, of fresh wood just chopped, and on top of it is tied a great bundle of hay, whilst behind hang sheaves of rye.

What do the peasantry think about this?

Along the whole road to Bobruisk, no matter where I asked the question:

—Don't the fugitives do you a lot of damage?

—*Nitchevo!* Nothing, that's all right.

—Don't they dig up your potatoes, and take away your hay?

— Yes, they take it. How not dig them up?

And for hundreds of versts, just as if it were a conspiracy, you will hear these phrases:

—Let them dig them up!

—They've got to eat, haven't they?

—Perhaps we shall have to do it ourselves!

I often heard:

—They take things in extremity. They ask for more, and we make them a present of it.

Not once did I hear the word which would be used to apply to beggars:

—*Podaem*, We grant.

But:

—*Daem*, We give.

Or, more often:

—*Dareem*, We present.

The peasants, especially the women, are distressed by the "unsung corpses,"[1] the dead which the fugitives have to bury by the roadside as they go.

In many places the people have told me:

—We said to them,—Give us your corpses. We will put them in their shrouds, sing the service, and bury them as Christians. But they have no time to do anything. They dig the grave the night before and next morning they go on.

The channel softly receives the river into itself.

[1] Without the proper funeral service.

In the great misfortune that has befallen these fugitives, the peasantry, by their humanity and good-will, have taken upon themselves half the burden of the calamity.

The peasants say:

—The first fugitives really did offend us.

—At first, in a way, they were rude.

Clearly, we ought specially to increase the number of relief stations,

—To lessen all this.

Oh, these relief stations beginning to be built after the fugitives had already arrived!

The peasants were really affronted by the people of Holm province

—The Holm people, these are the ones who were rude to us.

This is the general saying

In Kaluga province, in Mogilef, in Smolensk, and in Minsk.

The Holm peasants—are the most exasperating people.

Especially exasperating

How they talk of their own province!

—And is your land good?

—Our land? There's no such land anywhere else in the world. Do you call your ground land? I shouldn't think it worth cultivating. Now ours *is* land. One could eat it—that's the kind of land it is. Like bread!

—Were you well-off?

—Were we well-off? You people who live here couldn't dream what our life there was like.

—Did you have fine cattle?

—Such cattle I had! And such a house I had with a grove round it and money spent on it! How our children grew up! What cattle perished on the way hither, how many we sold for a mere nothing!

The rumour often went round among the Holm peasants that they were to be driven

—To Siberia.

And they were afraid.

—Such winter there! Nothing will ripen.

They are angry to have lost

—Such riches.

And according to the peasants, it is only those from Holm province who have been rude to them.

III

MEETING THE FUGITIVES

OCTOBER 10th.

Early morning. The fields are covered over with hoarfrost which looks like the first snow. The smoke stands in straight columns over the chimneys. There is a slight frost.

O Lord, remember those who wake this morning under the open sky!

In the town of Podolsk, near the bridge, a white flag with a red cross is flying over a two-storey house.

Opposite it a policeman is standing.

—What have you got here? A hospital?

—Nothing of the sort. A relief point for the fugitives.

—And have you any fugitives?

—No, none whatever, none.

I take a glance inside to see how the place has been arranged.

I meet a very pleasant person in charge, a young girl with a kind, simple face, a face such as one often sees.

A face I knew.

Had I met her before in a village school? Or at the time of an epidemic? Or in time of famine?

It's more likely that I never met her before.

But young people with faces like hers are seen everywhere where there is need of help

—For the people.

I shall often meet them now on this way of affliction.

—You haven't any fugitives yet?

—How haven't we any? We have.

—You have?

—Sixteen people.

On the ground floor it's as hot as in a bath-house.

It's difficult to breathe there.

The fugitives are sitting on iron bedsteads covered with grey woollen quilts.

They look like people from a town.

They sit there and they don't go out.

After eight or nine weeks under the open sky they don't want to go out of this suffocating heat.

From Podolsk we go to Little Yaroslavets.

We are borne along in two motor-cars belonging to the All Russian Municipal Alliance.

The high-road is quiet and deserted.

Along it they are carrying only enormous loads of charcoal for Moscow.

And here in Lukopin, fifteen versts from Podolsk, is the first fugitive.

He is striding along.

No one is in the cart.

It is drawn by a pair of fine, strong, well-cared for horses. A good strong cart, with a well-made covering.

The cover is of good American cloth, the sort used for table-cloths. Behind are fastened some Viennese chairs.

The man is well and warmly clothed. His boots are good.

No doubt he's some sort of farmer.

His face is overcast and gloomy.

He strides like a corporal. How many weeks has be been walking?

Now and then we strike bands of three or five wagons following one another, and we begin to see the fugitives.

And all the horses are fine ones, still,

A strong people.

The carts have no covers, but are tied over with dry uncured bristling calf-skins.

The skins of calves that have died on the road.

And that alone gives to the wagons a pitiful and sinister expression.

They stop at villages, and I cross-question them about the state of affairs.

—Have you any sick?

—No. We're a healthy set.

They praise up their horses.

—How much they've endured! What horses they are!

Along this "Way of the Cross" takes place

—A selection.

A terrible "natural," selection.

I am to see this later on.

All the weak ones perish.

Both of people and cattle.

They are tried by sickness, hunger, and cold.

From Baranovitch to Bobruisk, from Bobruisk by way of Dovsk to Roslavl, and in Roslavl, all the weak ones "remain behind."

Men, women, children, and horses.

These strong people with their strong horses—are like a marsh overgrown with emerald green grass, behind which is a swamp and a quagmire.

"A strong front" which has, however, a dreadful significance.

How many "sacrificial victims" remain behind for only one of these who have got through.

We came through Malo-Yaroslavets with its memorials of 1812.

—Have you any fugitives?

—A few of them come through. They say there are crowds in Medin.

That is all the sign there is of the great "movement of the people."

All:

—They say:

The fugitives do not know whither they are going.

They come along gropingly.

As if in the dark.

No one along the road knows:

—What is coming? How many? What to expect? For what must they be prepared?

The sun has risen higher and it has become quite warm.

Only the shadows of the trees are outlined upon the whitened grass. And in the shadow lies the hoar-frost.

God in one thing has had pity upon the poor earth.

He has sent a warm, and best of all, a dry, autumn.

What would it have been like in—mud? What will it be like when the rain pours down?

How will the fugitives go on then?

It's far on in autumn, and such weather!

The birch woods of fair and sweet Kaluga province stand all golden.

All the colours of gold, from pale yellow to bright crimson.

The variegated forest alternates with evergreen and autumn yellow.

The villages are preparing for their winter sleep.

Earth has been heaped against the walls of the cottages.

The crevices of the walls of the *izba* have been retrimmed with moss, and the roofs with straw.

Every little cottage looks as if it were wrapped up in a new overcoat.

The village has become a new village.

The peasant women are just the same as ever.

Judging by all signs, by the cleanliness and order of their houses and themselves, they've got quite "straight."

To-day is Sunday, and they're all arrayed in their best clothes.

The peasant women of Kaluga dress

themselves beautifully, and in bright colours.

But there is none of the ordinary Sunday excitement.

You can't smell Sunday in the street.

They're only dressed in their best, because

—It's the custom.

Sunday!

The whole village keeps to the custom.

And it's dull now in the villages.

The large village of Ilyinska with its statue of Alexander the Second, glimmers as we pass.

In Russia now there are many villages with statues of the Tsar-Liberator.

We come to Medin and stop in the market-place.

—Any fugitives here?

—Yes, some who've been sent to our district. Look, there are some in the market.

They are selling things, and buying what is necessary, going everywhere.

But they arouse no curiosity, nor any special interest. No one questions them, nor exclaims at their misfortunes.

It's as if they had lived there for a century

And not arrived yesterday from some unknown place.

There proceeds:

—Assimilation.

The country as silently drinks in the river as the river comes silently to it.

See, over there on the right is a whole new settlement.

The little barracks are of newly cut wood.

That's the first relief point on this road.

A man is standing there in the uniform of a provincial watchman.

—Is it possible to look over the buildings?

—Excuse me, your honour, I don't belong to these parts. I'm also one of the fugitives. I'm getting a little warmth.

It is one of the relief points of the Municipal Alliance.

A large white linen sign is hanging up.

—"Relief Point." "Tea for fugitives." "Boiled drinking water."

There are enormous saucepans for stewing beef and making cabbage soup.

Two peasant women are cutting up the beef into small pieces.

One big shed has many long tables for meals.

There are ten people having a meal there.

A two-storey shed with sleeping shelves to accommodate five hundred people, where it is not only warm but hot, thanks to the enormous iron pipes running the whole length of the shed.

At some little distance is another shed —for the sick.

In the open field "places" are fenced round, bearing the notices:

—"For men." "For women."

Very well arranged.

Even in front of the shed where hot water is given out for tea, a wooden barrier has been erected, just as in front of a theatre box-office.

—So as to avoid crowding, and that the people may keep order and come in their turn—explained the provincial watchman.

Afterwards, when we see multitudes of refugees using these "points," the remembrance of these details makes us smile.

But it is good that even here they've begun to do things as they should.

Later, when the great wave of fugitives bursts in upon this place, these warmed buildings will save many a life.

In the meantime:

—Are there many fugitives coming through?

—Not a great many.

But with each ten versts of our onward journey we meet the fugitives more and more often, and the lines of them become longer and longer.

There, on the beautiful shore of the winding River Izvera, in one of its curves, under an acacia, in the clear sweet air a little smoke is curling.

Ten covered carts are encamped there.

The folk have stopped to cook dinner.

Near them sits a policeman in a cart.

I go nearer.

The policeman is talking to an old woman lying on the ground.

—Don't you know that a sick person mustn't lie on the ground like this? You're old, but you must understand that.

The old woman only moans quietly.

— Lift her up and put her in the cart. She'll have rheumatism in all her joints, he explains to me.

—No, let her lie out in the sunshine. Perhaps she'll get warm in the sun—says a peasant, speaking for the woman.

—But isn't she very ill?

—She's quite broken down. Arms, legs, she can't turn her head without crying out.

The old woman only moans.

—But where can you go with her like that? You ought to have asked them to take her in at a hospital somewhere.

—That's impossible. She would be left behind and lost. There's a woman who has lost her husband, doesn't know where he is.

A middle-aged peasant woman is seated on the ground, combing out her long hair.

Her face looks very mournful. Her

eyes are staring fixedly at some point in front of her.

And she speaks in a quiet monotonous voice, with no expression at all in it,—it's pitiful to hear her.

—Yes, my husband is lost. He's lost.

—Where was he lost? How was it?

—How can we know where? another peasant answers for her—we don't know anything about it.

—But how did it happen?

—Her husband went to a relief point and got lost in the great crowd. That's how it was. We all went on; he got left behind. There were two roads. Some of us were told to go along one and some were sent along the other. We thought he'd catch us up. But he must have gone along the other road and looked for us there. A whole day went by, he didn't come. And the next day he didn't come.

We've never seen him since. And it's five days now.

—My husband's lost, he's lost! repeated the woman monotonously, still combing her hair.

But where did this happen?

—It was in Yaroslav province, sir. That's all we know, that it was in Yaroslav province. But in what village or hamlet, or where it was—we don't know.

—But it couldn't have been in Yaroslav province. You haven't come through Yaroslav at all. The town of Roslavl, yes, but not Yaroslav.

—That's what I tell them. Roslavl. And they're going all over the place, seeking Yaroslav province—says the policeman.

—Here's a paper that will help you on all occasions when you're seeking the way. Now, I've written down the correct name of the town, Roslavl.

—But where can we look? said the peasant. The earth is great, and there are many roads upon it, and all the roads go in different directions. One man goes this way, another that way. It's no good looking.

And all the people around begin to discuss the hopelessness of the woman's position, just as if she were not there.

—Perhaps it'll happen that you'll meet him somewhere! says the policeman—but you can't get any information from the police reports, as you could in ordinary times. The unfortunate thing is she doesn't know where she is, and she doesn't know where he is. There's nowhere to send an inquiry form. A formal police report would be impossible to obtain.

—It's like being in a desert, says a peasant.

—A desert! I like that. All around

such a mass of people, and you say a desert, protests the policeman.

—For us it is a desert. It's dark all around. We can see nothing. It's a desert.

—So she'll be left: neither a widow nor a married wife.

—Perhaps they'll meet, by a miracle.

—She'll be more likely to have to wait. In the next world they'll meet.

—Here a man is lost like a needle in a haystack.

To be left behind.

This is the thought which sends them all forward, in spite of their weariness and failing strength.

They will not wait at the relief points, but go away hungry and dig up a few potatoes at night-time somewhere or other to appease their hunger. They are afraid

—To be left behind and lost:

They hide their very sick folk in their covered carts, fearful lest they should be detained at the relief point and:

—Be left behind.

They bury their dead at night without a service, afraid:

—To be left behind.

A simple breaking of a wheel causes terror to the fugitive:

—I shall be left behind!

—How can I overtake the others?

—They will go into the forest. How shall we find them in the forest?

And they go on, go on, go on, without rest, when their strength is exhausted, sick and dying, as if under the lash of a whip, afraid:

—Of being left behind.

Here a man can be lost, as a needle in a bundle of hay.

—I've lost my husband, he's lost—I can still hear the monotonous expres-

sionless voice of the peasant woman as I leave the encampment.

The man has been drowned in this river of people.

We come to the second relief point of the Municipal Alliance. Farther on we shall see them every fifteen or seventeen versts.

Either a relief point of the Municipal Alliance or of the Northern-Help Society.

Along the whole of the high-road there still remain entire, no doubt from the times of Nicholas I., old little-used post-stations.

Monumental buildings, built "according to the taste of the wise old times."

A one-storey house which can well hold stores of bread, grain, pork-fat, all kinds of country produce,

A large courtyard to hold forage for the fugitives,

The stone apartments of what were once warm stables, where sleeping-shelves can be put-up—and the rest rooms are all prepared to lodge fugitives for the night.

The workmen of the Municipal Alliance and the Northern-Help have quickly and skilfully adapted these buildings.

In front of this first post-station there are already a hundred fugitives.

We are met by a lady, the manager of the relief point.

—I'm quite a veteran—says she.

—I was a sister of mercy in the Russo-Turkish War.

She takes us over the place.

It is in perfect order, a model establishment.

There is excellent strong soup, with plenty of beef in it.

—We often read in the newspapers about the various horrors connected with

the fugitives, and we are greatly astonished. Where do the papers get such accounts? There's nothing dreadful here. Not so many sick people. Chiefly peasant women who have given birth to children in the forest, in the cold. Yes, that's so. But no deaths, no graves by the roadside, no horrors. Only where do they get such accounts from? The people are quiet. For instance, there are some who have stopped in front of me and got in my way. I grumble at them a little . . . or rather, I give them a good scolding, and they very obediently move to one side. So where do the papers get their picture from?

An idyll!

—Wait a little, madam, all is yet to come.

The nearer we get to Smolensk province the oftener do we meet with fugitives, oftener, oftener, oftener.

What we have seen is only the first stream of the oncoming flood.

The waves come one after the other, each higher than the other, higher.

There on the right and left of the road, in the forests, under the trees, something white is gleaming.

The affrighted imagination is alert and on guard.

—Crosses?

Not as yet.

They are the fresh stumps of hewn trees.

Whole glades have been cut down.

In the midst of grey ashes are the black spots of extinguished camp fires.

The sun is already setting. It grows cold.

The hewn stumps gleam oftener and oftener.

But if you ask the peasants

—Don't the fugitives do some damage?

They all reply

—*Nitchevo.* Nothing that matters.

In Smolensk province they already begin to add,

—At first they did. But now they have gendarmes in charge of them.

The fugitives are now met in large parties. Ahead of them goes a gendarme on horseback.

—And that's all right? In charge of the gendarmes they do no damage?—I ask.

—Eh, master!—answers the old peasant whom I am questioning—there's no animal that does so much harm when he strays to feed, as man! But they are quiet when the gendarme leads.

It is quite evening now.

Near the station to which we have come are already about sixty carts.

I want to see how food is distributed to the people.

But it is impossible to get into the house.

One window is open, and from that they give out the bread.

A crowd of peasant women are standing by the house.

They raise their arms and hold out their certificates.

—How many there are in the family.

Approaching nearer, I hear a quiet murmur.

Not a cry, not a noise, but a quiet monotonous murmur.

All in one tone, continuously, hurriedly, unceasingly, they repeat one and the same word

—Something strange.

—Me give—me give—me give—me give.

Just like a reader in church, repeating continuously, forty times in succession:

—O Lord, have mercy upon us!

You cannot imagine anything more distressing to the nerves than this uninterrupted, never-silent, monotonous:

—Me give—me give—me give—me give—me give. . . .

A sister with a white kerchief on her head and a crimson face shows herself at the window.

—Yes, we hear. We hear you. We'll give you some—she cries despairingly.

But the crowd continues its sad unceasing murmur.

—Me give—me give—me give—me give—me give. . . .

I learnt afterwards that this "way" was invented entirely by the same turbulent people of Holm province.

All the others wait in silence.

The Holm women repeat unweariedly:

—Me give—me give—me give—me give—me give. . . .

I get into the motor-car and go farther

on, but mingled with the whistling of the wind in my ears is always

—Me give—me give—me give—me give—me give. . . .

And for long I cannot get rid of the sound.

IV

IN THE FOREST

IT is getting colder and colder.

The golden and rose and flame colours of sunset have played themselves out on the cloudless pale green sky.

On the left, over the forest, like a phantom, is seen the pale fine sickle of the new moon.

From the marsh and from the little river over which we pass comes an icy breath.

There are mists in the low-lying places.

Everywhere it becomes darker and darker.

The moon's sickle is getting all yellow, all clear, more and more full of light.

Stars are scattered about in the sky as on a winter night—so many there are.

In their light the sky appears darkly, darkly, blue.

And, as if enchanted, the dark black forest comes to life.

On the right, on the left, there, here, near at hand, in the depths, through the thicket of fine black branches gleams the red of large fires.

Pillars of sparks arise and float above.

It is as if fireworks were being let off in the forest.

The sweet scent of burning wood is in the air.

The farther we go into the forest the stronger is this scent, the oftener do we meet the fires.

And it seems as if we are not in the forest at all—but as if a kind of illuminated endless town were stretching itself out upon the road.

We stop the car—the forest is full of rustlings and noises.

Human sounds are heard—here and there an axe resounds, bonfires crackle.

I stop for a little and go into the forest.

I make my way through the branches —there is a hewn glade around which the thicket stands like a wall.

A covered cart, a camp-fire; all is quiet.

Nothing is heard save the champing of the horses, munching hay.

Around the fire in silence sits a family.

The first thing that meets the eye is the bare feet of the children almost into the fire.

—Good evening, good people!

The appearance of a man at night in the forest, coming from no one knows where, causes no surprise, no curiosity, does not even appear strange.

They don't even look round.

—What's this man come for?

They answer kindly and civilly:

—Good evening, sir!

—What are you doing in the forest? Why didn't you stay near the "point"?

—It's exposed there, sir, it's cold. It's warmer in the forest. Look at the children.

—Are they very ill?

—They get wet and cold, and then they die.

—The ground is as cold as iron. And they're barefoot.

The children of the refugees are their most precious possession. They grieve most of all for the children. But the children are almost without clothing.

The peasant men are warmly clad. Almost every one has a warm coat.

The women are all right. They're muffled up somehow.

But the children. . . .

For the children evidently there had been no previous provision.

At home, children are part of the general surroundings—something like dear domestic animals. And one thinks about them as much as one would about a cat.

—Why should one trouble about a child?

For the children nothing is made.

And the refugees' children die like flies.

—They lie with their stomachs to the fire, and their backs are as cold as ice. They turn their backs to the fire and their stomachs freeze.

And they die.

And the children sit there in silence, sticking out their little red hands and dirty bare legs almost into the fire, and listen to what is said about them.

—Inevitable death.

On the fire some food is being cooked in saucepans.

On the bonfire.

The saucepans are not made to hang over the fire.

They are the ordinary pots for cooking on a stove.

Not suitable for a nomad life!

Now we've got to the reason why dysentery is raging.

In order to cook potatoes, cabbage, porridge—they place the pot near the fire, turning first one side and then the other.

The food cannot get cooked through.

It is burnt at the sides, in the middle it remains raw.

They eat this mixture of half-burnt, half-raw food—and thence arises this terrible dysentery.

The woman picks up what looks like a bundle of rags lying near the fire, and from it comes suddenly a little whine.

—I suppose you haven't a little powder

with you, sir? The baby is ill. It's taken a chill, and is ill.

—Did you show it to the people at the "point"?

—At one place they gave me some milk porridge. But it was no good. Haven't you any sort of powder for children?

I go on farther, through the thicket.

Another cut-down space, a little larger.

Three camp-fires in a row.

Several families are seated there.

And again, the sudden appearance of an unknown man does not call forth any curiosity.

The people are not interested in anything.

It's all the same to them.

Once more they give the courteous reply:

—Good evening, sir.

Much as I have gone about among the

fugitives, amongst those suffering most severely, never have I heard anything but kind, polite, pitiful words.

—Father!—an old man sitting crouching over the fire squeaked rather than said:

—Father, haven't you any stomach drops? The pain's like a knife, father!

I go on farther.

A bonfire. Near it lies a man, immovable.

—What's the matter with him?

—Rheumatism, sir.

—But how can you let him lie on the ground? I ask, repeating the question of the village policeman not long before.

—At the fire, sir, he can warm himself. It's got into his jaws. He can't open his mouth. Can't eat, can't talk. Oh sir, haven't you something for rheumatism?

I go on farther still.

Again there is a man lying by the fire.

—What's the matter with him?

—Everything passes through him.

—Blood?

—That's it, sir. Blood.

The peasant lifts his head, and says sadly in a weak voice, with a deathly sadness,

—My blood is flowing out of me. It flows out. I'm cold inside me. All my blood is going out of me.

And calmly, just as if he were not there, the people around say:

—Yes, that's so, he passes blood. He's no strength left—and look at him! That's the sort of state he's in.

And there is a chorus:

—Oh sir, haven't you any sort of medicine with you?

—Sir! *Pan!* Master! Stop my blood from flowing away!

—Medicine! Medicine! Medicine! Haven't you any medicine?

And there are more and more campfires in the forest.

Here a dark strip, then again, as if it were a town—then again a dark strip.

About ten versts from Roslavl there is a red glow in the sky.

—A fire?

—And a large one.

The nearer we approach the brighter and clearer becomes the glare.

Only one thing is strange: the glare does not waver. It's not like the glare of a fire.

The glare becomes enormous.

It stands apparently right over the town.

—What is it? Roslavl on fire?

—And there . . .

What a wonderful picture!

We get to within three versts of Roslavl.

On the right, on the left, wherever you look, bonfires, bonfires, bonfires.

A whole sea of bonfires.

It is damp. The smoke settles downward.

It is impossible to breathe along the road for the smoke.

It stops the breathing, makes the eyes smart.

The lights of the relief cars cannot penetrate this thick smoke.

And all around in the smoke are crimson fires.

Showers of sparks fly about in the sky.

This great glare is the necessary outcome of all these camp-fires.

Possibly only in the times of the Tartar invasion were there such pictures.

All around in the forest is the unceasing chatter of some gigantic crowd.

Saws are creaking. As in an Old Believers' settlement in the woods when people are called to prayer with a wooden clapper is the sound of the axes, the axes

ring soundingly in the night air upon the cold trees.

A sort of continuous forest-clearing.

And the whole shore of the River Oster is spread before us and below us in a bright opal smoke with purple spots in it.

And when we drive over the railway bridge, and see below the blue and red lights, and hear the whistle of the steam-engines, we involuntarily ask:

—Is this really the twentieth century?

V

THE DESOLATION OF ROSLAVL

ROSLAVL, on the River Oster, is a quiet little town in the province of Smolensk. Ordinarily, when you drive along the highroad coming from the West, in Rogachef, in Cherikof, in Propoisk, in Krichef, they will tell you that Roslavl is:

—The first Russian town.

From here to the eastward, Great Russia begins.

When you arrive at Roslavl you will be awakened in the morning by the soft yet powerful baritone of its marvellous bell, sounding from the height of the Transfiguration monastery on the hill.

And you will hear this, like music—

for the first time on the whole of your journey from the West up till then.

A gracious little town.

Here everything has some sort of

—A name.

Not only orphanages and trade-schools bear the name of some one, of some local citizen,

But even the trading banks—and such like places,

—Bear some name or other.

A remarkably gracious little town.

Now Roslavl is choked and drowned.

There is neither sugar nor salt in the town.

In the streets fugitives stop you and ask,

—Friend, where can I buy any salt here? I've been trying to get some all day.

—Little father, where can we get any sugar? Even if it's only half a pound or a quarter of a pound.

You go into a baker's shop and ask:

—Have you any white bread?

The shopman looks at you in wonder.

—We bake no white. Only black, and even that's all taken for the fugitives.

—The fugitives will eat us up, says Roslavl in terror.

But the wave of fugitives comes on and on, and a stench is given forth from it.

Here the great river stops, and its waters turn round and round, like a whirlpool.

Roslavl is overwhelmed; the tide rises above its head.

The reason?

—The railway.

Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people will remember with horror:

—The desolation of Roslavl.

Here is enacted a dreadful scene,

"The completion of the process."

—The fugitives giving up their horses.

First they were as "gipsies," but now they have turned into a Khitrof market.[1]

Numbers of the fugitives, the great majority of them, having exhausted their last strength and reached the railway:

—Have the last thing to do as peasants.

They sell their horses.

And thence go onward

—In the train.

Waiting in an open-air camp in Roslavl for a week or so, until

—They are given places.

And with what desperation do they cling to the possession of their horses.

Here I made the acquaintance of a fugitive.

—A bitter man.

[1] A notorious district in Moscow, where beggars, tramps, and thieves congregate, and where there are many doss-houses.

His wife died two weeks before the final ruin and he has three children, two very young, and a baby.

He had owned some land and was a farmer.

—He had paid 12,000 roubles for it.

The payment had been spread over seven years and all had been paid.

—He had only just begun to make a living.

And now "this had happened."

He had managed to bring away all his cattle. And four horses.

He had gone a long way.

But in Minsk province, where a continuous marsh extends for tens and tens of versts, an order had come to clear the high-road, and the cattle had been driven on to the marsh.

—My little son—said he, who had gone on in front with the cattle, ran back to meet me at a turn of the road, crying,

"Daddy, Daddy, the cattle are all drowned in the marsh." I ran to him. The herd of cattle were twisting and writhing in the bog. Bellowing. And among them I saw mine.

He spoke sadly but calmly about the death of his wife, about his land that had "cost so much money." But

—I'd rather have been blinded than see such a sight. A second ruin. All my property perishing in the quagmire, and I stand on the road and become a beggar.

Three horses died on the way.

One remained. A little shaggy horse, ten years old, but active.

In Roslavl he found a kind man who permitted him to live in his *banya*, bath-house.

A black *banya*.

—But that was a palace!

Day and night I never cease to pray to

God for the kind man who saved my children,—says he.

He has found a footing at Roslavl and will remain there. Drives a cab.

—Two roubles a day shall I earn, think I. One and a half will feed the horse, and the fifty copecks which remain must suffice for us four.

—Not a large budget. And what if you were to sell the horse and go farther?

He looked at me straight in the eyes with terror.

—Master! said he, I have a horse, and so all the same I remain a man! A human being! But without a horse, what sort of a being should I be? What should I be?

On all sides you hear:

—Well, at least we have a horse! So we can still count ourselves human beings! Still peasants!

—And if the money be all spent, and

the peasant cease to be a peasant. What then?

The last thing that connects him with the past, the last thing that binds him to life.

Along the main street of Roslavl from earliest morning till the darkness of night without interruption, without ceasing, go two processions, one one way, the other the other.

On one side of the road come an endless series of grey carts, one after another endlessly—and pass away towards that stretch of the road where yesterday we saw innumerable camp bonfires.

On the other side coming from that place come refugees on horseback, some astride, some sitting sideways, on little worn-out horses. They go to the bazaar.

Betwixt the two processions is the long empty alley of the middle of the street.

On both sides there is silence

As if funeral processions going in opposite directions were meeting one another.

Not even looking at one another, in fact, as if they did not remark one another.

To the town:

—To seek salt?

To know:

—What further orders have been given? Whither should they go now?

No, no, they are carrying coffins through,

Mostly children's.

A peasant is carrying a coffin on his shoulder. Silently after him and without weeping strides his peasant wife. Clinging to her skirts also silently and without weeping come frozen barefooted children.

Look, here comes a large coffin.

From the hardly shut lid hang new and bright coloured cottons.

It is a girl that has died.

Four girls are carrying the coffin.

They will bury her in the right way, with the ritual.

In the proper place.

The little procession went past, simple, beautiful, melancholy.

No one stopped to look round, to turn the head.

No one meeting the procession crossed himself, nor drew off his hat, nor gave any attention.

As if the people had ceased to see with their eyes.

And there stretches, stretches, along the footways, along the margin of the road, without respite, without interval, without interruption, the two processions ever coming towards one another and passing.

Grey carts, carts, carts. Horses, horses, horses, fugitives wandering like shad-

ows, horses, children's coffins, and again horses, horses, horses.

The head turns giddy looking at the endless movement.

It becomes difficult to breathe because of that which passes before the eyes.

And strange.

In this little town through which comes such an ocean of people, it is as quiet:

As if it were all one great funeral.

I had hardly come into the market-place before the crowd swirled round me with quick movements and feverish eyes.

Whence had they come to Roslavl? Whence had so many come?

There were all dialects.

Great Russian, Russian with Little Russian accent, with Polish accent.

—*Panitch!* Do you want horses? You can buy them very reasonably. Ah, so reasonably! A horse that cost a

hundred roubles, you can buy for twenty-five. Do you wish to buy?

—Wait for me, wait for me. I'll take you to the horses.

—Mr. Squire, Mr. Squire, here are horses. Farm horses! And cheap! Cheap! I'll bring them to you.

There's no getting through the horses in the market—no possibility of penetrating through.

There stands one great solid crowd.

Quick people even slip about under the horses.

What the prices are you may judge from separate exclamations.

—If there's such a bargain anywhere else on God's earth I'd like to hear of it! says a fugitive, turning over and turning over again the dirty notes which he has received.

—Don't get rid of them here. Better sell their skins in Kalutsk.

—Take the twelve roubles now. Take them now. To-morrow you'll be glad to sell at ten.

—By to-morrow she'll drop down dead if you go on!

—What! Fifteen roubles not good money? Did you say that? You?

—Ten roubles as they stand! From hand to hand! says a tall, dark peasant with a long beard, standing beside a cart to which are tied six horses, all skin and bone.

He says in a contemptuous tone:

—You see the horses. A red note for each. Altogether. Take them. It will mean money. Without money there's no doing anything.

I say to a fugitive:

—Don't you know that in Muchin yard, beyond the town, they're buying for the Government. There you would get a fairer price.

The fugitive does not succeed in answering for himself.

Once more the crowd of people with quick movements and feverish eyes.

—The Government? There, you'll never get a turn!

—It's necessary to stand three days.

He's got to hurry for the train. See what a lot of people are coming in.

—He will be late, and have to wait a month in the open. The autumn rains will start.

—And cold. All his children will freeze.

—From Bobruisk another five hundred thousand are coming.

—Who are you, Mister? Are you someone from the Government or a Relief Committee?

—Our little children are just freezing to death, says another fugitive.

And at this market where horses and

people are crushed in one compact mass where from the heat of bodies and the smell of horses it is difficult to breathe, if any one is cheerful, it is only the purchaser.

The fugitives have not much to say for themselves, and that in a low voice,

As if stunned.

They sell their horses and stand as if in perplexity.

They go away—horseless, peasants no longer, wordless.

In appearance so calm and indifferent:

As if nothing had happened.

No expression of the grief, of the deadly melancholy which is in the soul.

A silent land.

In the same street as the market-place, by the Petrograd Hotel, from dawn until late evening, the crowd is like stone.

There's no getting through.

The hotel is occupied by the Committee:

—Of "Northern-Help."

Here it is arranged for the fugitives:

—Where each has to go.

I attempt to pass through the crowd and get as far as the gateway.

Farther is impossible.

The stench is such that the head simply goes round.

May God give strength to the Relief delegates working in this stench—to remain healthy!

—We've been waiting for days!—complain the fugitives,—and stand without a bite of food from morning.

—What's a day! You stand a day and at the end of it go away. To-morrow you come again and have had nothing to eat.

I cast a glance at the Town Hall, where is a crowd of peasant women. In a corner is a table. With the notice:

—"Employment Bureau."

A stout lady sitting there says to a peasant woman standing with a child in her arms:

—With us, my dear, the conditions of employment for servants are usually . . .

Tiny Roslavl. How is it possible to find employment here for tens of thousands of people!

The peasant women stand in the waiting rooms. They stand patiently, they stand all day.

And having obtained nothing whatever, go away.

In the street you are stopped by people, saying:

—Are you not in need of workmen in your village?

—Are you not hiring people?

And all in such melancholy, hopeless, gentle voices.

I drive back to the placewhere last night I saw a horde of nomads—an actual horde.

From the high bank of the Oster, on that side from which the forest has been cleared, you see for versts and versts a cloud of bluish, half-transparent smoke.

That's the evening camping ground.

I walk farther and farther into the forest over the soft wilted grass.

Everywhere are glades, everywhere people, huts of pine-branches, and from all sides is heard the sound of axes.

How many thousands of people are there here!

People tell you various enormous numbers.

Give it up.

How calculate:

—How many drops of water are there in the river?

What a terrible smoke in the forest! Because of the smoke the eyes of all are red and painful.

—It is damp at night, the smoke settles

down, and there's no getting out of the wood—says a small farmer to me,—but it's warm in the smoke. Just like sitting in a dark *izba*. Hot, even. We warm the forest. That's what it's come to for us.

—Perhaps it's just the smoke that saves us, says his neighbour also a farmer —everyone is coughing all around, some are spitting blood, but in the smoke every microbe perishes.

Going farther into the forest I come upon a crowd.

A priest is explaining to them how and where to go that their horses may be properly inspected and priced, how to go to Muchin yard, sell their horses, and receive the money; how to go to the railway station and wait their turn for a seat in the train, how much will be given to each man for food.

All circumstantially.

—And I will drive ahead and meet you

at such and such a station. That's so many versts away.

This is a priest from the province of Holm, and he is explaining to his flock.

Many of the priests of Holm province accompany their refugees.

And the help which they give is colossal.

They get some sort of understanding of the situation for themselves and explain everything to their people.

It is asked:

—Where are the numberless local officials, the people looking after the village in time of peace, where are they now in the time of terror and calamity, where have they betaken themselves—where, saving themselves, do they receive their former official salary?

How have they abandoned this illiterate people who do not even understand the Russian language well, in such a moment.

They looked after them all the time like children, and then, in the difficult moment, abandoned the children to the will of Fate!

Had they come with their own refugees, had even the least important of them come, there would have been someone to whom to turn for information, to find out things.

But abandoned, left entirely to themselves, the fugitives grope about, and feel their way like people with bandaged eyes.

Not knowing even:

—Whither to go.

A man sells his horse, deprives himself of his last possession, takes the last step, and

—Whither away?

—Whither to go? Whither is he supposed to go?

He waves his arms helplessly.

—I do not know.

—Where can I find out?

—I do not know.

He knows only that:

—It is on the train that he is to go.

I made acquaintance with a priest.

He spoke bitterly. There was desperation in his voice.

—We try to preserve ourselves together. But we are assigned to places! Assigned! One part of the flock to Riazan, another to Kazan, a third to Orenburg!

Here in the wood are fugitives at the last limit of their strength, making a decision:

—To deprive themselves of the last thing.

To sell their horses.

They sell them in the market-place, in Muchin yard, to "Northern-Help," to the Government, *fkaznu*, as they say.

Then they are already "not muzhiks"; they wander over from this camp to the camp near the railway station.

And whilst they are encamped in the wood they go backwards and forwards between the relief points of "Northern-Help" and the Municipal Alliance.

I ask the fugitives about the relief points.

Some answer:

—Those that can help are half-hearted. They can't do much. There is a mass of people, and always more coming, and more coming.

The majority gesticulate impatiently:

—What use are the points? They offend everybody.

—Those who happen to be near the relief points profit by them. But we stand far away.

—It's necessary to take your stand at one o'clock in the night, and wait your

turn till at midday you receive a bit of bread. You get your death of cold and then they give you a little to eat.

—Ah, master, you need strength there, strength. Who is stronger, he receives.

—By force.

—Crushing other people, and not letting them get anything for themselves.

—By sheer force a strong man can get more than he needs. The weak man is crushed and bruised. And he freezes.

At the relief points every one is making superhuman exertions.

But how get even with this elemental onrush?

—Salt a river! Is that possible?—said someone to me in despair, at one of these points on the road. The relief stations and barracks of "Northern-Help" and Municipal Alliance stand on the high-road facing each other.

A whole settlement.

Around them is a camp with carts—the aristocrats of misfortune.

—Fortunate ones:

Who have succeeded in obtaining for themselves places at the actual doors of the relief points.

It is colder than in the forest, but more satisfying.

On the great highway

—A promenade—as one of the numerous gendarmes keeping order put it.

Not only is it difficult to drive through, but difficult to walk through.

The people flock first one way, then the other, with downcast visage, to the forest, from the forest, from one side of the highway to the other side of the highway.

At the bonfires they warm their red and chilblained hands.

Horses pass through the crowd.

With triangular brandings on their hind legs.

These are the horses bought by the Society of Northern-Help.

Everywhere there are notices to the effect that:

—It is not permitted to sell or to buy branded horses under pain of a heavy penalty.

These purchased horses are given out to neighbouring landowners and farmers at a charge of fifteen copecks per day:

—To graze.

Whatever is there for them to graze on in late autumn?

Many horses wander about lost.

They come to the high-road, to the people, to the other horses.

They wander about quietly, somehow helplessly, looking around them with their wise, sad eyes.

As if they were seeking their own people.

Horses at the last gasp of their strength.

But no one pays any attention to them.

Neither do the horses pay attention.

They stumble upon people.

In the peasant huts occupied as relief points bread is taken in at the back door, cut up there, and handed out from a little window in the front.

So from morning to night bread flows in an uninterrupted stream.

Sentries keep the order of those who are waiting for bread.

In front of the bread windows range endless ranks of fugitives.

Thousands and thousands of people.

One person moves an inch, another person moves an inch, and from the midst is heard wails.

—You're suffocating me! Oh, suffocating.

People fall unconscious.

Here indeed only the stronger can stand the strain.

The hungry crush the hungry in order that they may squeeze into a better place in the line and receive their bit of bread sooner.

The women, the children, with wide staring eyes, with deathly pale faces.

Quietly and silently the fierce and cruel struggle goes on.

All around the people swarm like flies.

A man in a uniform has only to appear, or even a gentleman in civil attire, and the fugitives swarm about him.

—Your high nobility! Show us your official mercy!

Where have I heard this melancholy, hopeless tone, these very words of humiliation?

Somewhere I have heard . . .

Something familiar . . .

—What is it you want?

—Give us a certificate!

Food is only given out to those who have certificates:

—According to the number of souls in the family.

Such certificates ought to have been obtained from the village authorities at the point from which they started.

—They did not give us them! We had not time to get them.

—Lost!

—We shall die of hunger.

—Your high nobility!

They come for everything, they come to make complaints.

—Your high nobility! Permit me to explain. The *starosta* advised me to wait for the Germans and not go away. I did not agree. He got angry and refused to give me a certificate. Decide for yourself! Show God's mercy, and give me one now.

The crowd surrounded another man,

some sort of engineer in charge of the building of the barracks.

—Your high nobility!

—I give no certificates whatever. They are not for me to give. Do you understand? I haven't got the right to give them. I am building barracks.

—How haven't you the right?

That means we've got to die, I suppose?

—No one has the right. No one will give a certificate.

—How haven't you the right? You have authority.

—An engineer! I am an engineer!

—It's all the same. Give us a certificate.

—A certificate.

—Your high nobility.

The engineer jumped into his car.

But the motor-car could hardly move in the crowd at a walking pace, hardly, hardly.

Following the car went the people, crying out in melancholy, monotonous, hopeless tones:

—Your high nobility! Show official kindness.

And suddenly I remembered:

—Where I had heard these very voices.

That very tone.

Sakhalin. The convicts having come:

—For their portion.

Oh God, were not these people until yesterday peasants with horses!

A dreadful place:

—Is Muchin yard.

Where the fugitive ceases to be:

—A peasant.

At ordinary times I suppose this yard is simply a large inn.

On the town side of the River Oster, on the heights.

Down below, under the cliff, is an im-

mense marshy meadow, and there, what a wild, what a strange picture . . .

At that point I thought of the late V. V. Verestchagin.

Only he with his grey tones could have painted the grey horror of this life, only he could have painted the dreadful picture in all its horror.

For several acres the whole meadow was covered with abandoned and broken carts.

The iron parts had been unloosed and taken away, wheels lay separately, tilts separately.

How many were there there?

Tens of thousands.

The whole plain was grey with carts, with wheels, with shafts and single shafts.

Having sold their horses for cash, the fugitives abandoned their carts here, only taking with them the iron parts they could unfasten.

Among this grey wilderness of ruin fugitives were wandering.

These were people who preserved their horses and could still go on:

—In their own carts.

They sought here any bits of harness or shafts or wheels that could serve them better than their own.

From various separate parts they put together whole carts.

Some of the branded horses had come here.

Seeking perhaps, by scent or by instinct, the carts to which they had once been harnessed.

They wandered and stumbled.

Like shadows.

Hardly keeping their feet.

They fell.

There lies one. He breathes heavily, suddenly quivers tremulously.

In his round glassy eyes there is suffering.

He tries to raise his head from the ground.

He has not strength to hold it up, and lets it fall again.

Then suddenly he begins to wail, just like a man.

A little farther off lies a horse already stiff, and its long, long, lean legs stretch out.

In front of Muchin yard there is a crowd.

There's no making one's way through the carts.

And—a detail . . .

The horses are theirs no longer. They have been inspected, the price has been fixed, and the peasants await their money.

But to-day is cold and overcast, and all the horses are in some way sheltered from the cold.

The last service to "their" horses.

The last little care.

In all this there is a gentle and silent farewell.

The great yard is full. The solid mass of horses is almost motionless. There are a few cows.

You can tell by the melancholy expression of the horses, and their difficulty in moving, how exhausted they are.

You cannot get into the office where the money is being paid.

"Muchin yard"—that's where everything is done.

It is the place where they sell cattle, and a labour exchange and what not.

In the crowd of farmers and salesmen:

Workmen are hired.

—A cottage for two families costs thirty roubles.

—What, thirty roubles altogether?

By the tone of this sincere and deep astonishment (not vexation, but simply

unheard-of wonderment) you see what sort of prices are determined here.

—Each member of the family can work for his living separately.

—What do you mean by each member of the family earning separately?

—If you don't want to, you needn't.

And here, as in the market-place, discussions are short.

In Muchin yard, as everywhere, there are gendarmes, soldiers.

But they've nothing to do.

All is quiet.

As at a funeral.

At last, the final stage.

The whole way to the station are railway buildings, naphtha warehouses, and the open ground along the Briansk road is one continuous camping-ground of fugitives.

There are two trains a week.

One party has hardly been sent off

when from Muchin yard comes out three times the number of these "horseless ones."

The crowd does not melt away but increases.

Here it is cold, here there is no forest.

And the fugitives press together closely, family to family.

Only warming themselves in the smoke of their bonfires.

There are bonfires day and night.

Wandering women go from house to house in the neighbourhood.

They stop outside the doors, crying:

—Give, for Christ's sake, give us wood.

And, the heart anguished, they give.

—More still is stolen!

Here there is not:

—Giving,

As in the village.

But the people say straight out:

—We do give. We do more even than we can.

Irritated by fear for themselves, frightened at these "unheard-of people," the little towns and hamlets and the "all-understanding" villages. . . .

Can only express their astonishment at the celerity with which man adapts himself to circumstances.

Where and when have these peasants of yesterday learnt so quickly to build dens and dwelling-places from any sort of rubbish?

It's as if they were born nomads.

It simply makes one wonder.

—Out of what was all this put together? How does it hold?

Some slates stolen from one place, a paling broken somewhere else, an armful of hay, rags brought in by the children—and behold, a dwelling-place.

And O Lord, how to thank Thee that there is no longer any rain!

They freeze, get ill, watch their children die, and wait.

It's not possible to breathe.

All around is human filth.

In certain stinking horrible ponds, the peasant women with feet blue from the cold, are washing clothes.

And these ponds also are tainted with filth.

—Even here it's good to wash the linen.

—For we have been fairly eaten up!

And when I come here in the morning, whilst the ground all around is covered with hoar-frost and the half-expired bonfires glimmer beside the marsh on which the camp is set, the spectacle is dreadful.

How reckon up the sufferings?

It's no use even thinking of going across the station platform.

For passage there is only the merest margin above the rails where one might go along as on a tight-rope, and sideways.

The whole platform is occupied:

—By the fortunate ones.

By those who have gone through all the trials of the way of affliction, lost their horses, frozen in open camping-grounds for weeks whilst they waited; by the people who have at last obtained:

—Their turn.

And they will travel, no one knows where, no one knows to what end.

On immense bundles, on top of mountains of household furniture, lie people, lie or sit, and you can see that no force could prevail on them to abandon their positions.

When the bell rings, indicating the arrival of a goods train, wild scenes are enacted.

In the cattle-trucks it will at once be-

come warm, because of the many people, and the fugitives rush to take the train by storm, crushing one another as they push forward.

And they lug along their bundles.

And how much of the strangest, most unnecessary rubbish do they pull along with them into the trucks, and heap up in the places which might otherwise be occupied by extra people!

Rubbish for us—but the last possessions for them.

That is all that remains.

I return to the town.

In endless series, meeting one another and passing on, go the two processions up and down the street.

They come, they come, they come, without respite, without interruption, the grey carts.

They are all like one. One like another. And on the other side of the road come

the fugitives on horseback, the fugitives on horseback, to sell their horses.

And in this whirlpool of the river of human grief, little and dreadful Roslavl has choked and drowned.

Such was the coming of the fugitives into Great Russia.

VI

IN THE FORESTS OF MOGILEF

ON the road from Roslavl to Bobruisk there passes before us the great movement of the people in all its grandeur.

—Where are you going now?—they asked me in Roslavl.

—To the province of Mogilef.

—And, to Poland.

So in ordinary parlance, do they call the province of Mogilef, the extremest, foremost point of Great Russia.

Day by day the mornings become frostier.

There is thin ice on the marsh.

The province of Mogilef is this:

—Sand, on which the forest has grown.

In the wind there are drifts of Mogilef sand upon the road.

From ahead there comes forward on the road whole clouds, whole white clouds.

Dust.

The grey carts go no longer in single file.

They have occupied the highway in its whole width.

They come on like a wall.

The aching eyes of the horses, the aching eyes of the people, equally full of physical suffering and full of affliction, rend the heart.

Over the branches of the trees, whither a glance of the eyes will not take you, rise the many smokes.

Now it is continuous.

The whole forest is inhabited.

Through the dust the whole atmosphere is yet penetrated with a sweet odour of hot pine branches.

And that scent we shall breathe the whole way without ceasing.

Two hundred and fifty versts of smoke.

And no limit and no respite.

What a grey nightmare it is that comes on, and comes on without end.

And empty carts, with horses tied on behind, come gaily along the side of the road to meet the people, avoiding the mass of traffic in the centre.

These are the carts of the buyers from Roslavl.

—For a bargain.

In the cart stands a muzhik, so as to see the road better than he would sitting down.

And lashes his horse.

Beside this horse and running at the sides of the cart, and behind it are a multiplicity of legs.

As if a spider were running quickly, quickly along the road.

The fugitives get out of the way, give

up the road,—and no one even pays attention to the running spiders.

The road becomes more and more clear of forest.

All the land which has been cultivated, and the crops, are ruined.

Along the roadway, for the whole length of the road, stretches a line of planted trees.

As a protection from sand and from snow.

Against the drifts.

Half of these trees have now been rooted up.

Truly:

—As if the Tartar had gone by.

Look, at the twenty-verst post of the road gleams a white cross.

Three more crosses.

More still.

Still new ones, more new ones, yesterday's cemetery.

They are white, like little Georgian crosses, crosses pinned to the much-suffering road.

Just like Georgian orders:

—For self-sacrifice.

And there was expressed, together with affliction, much warmth and much beauty.

"They" do the burying at nights.

Do not bury, but:

—Dig holes for the dead,

as the peasants say.

—Because it is without the requiem hymn. Surely such an act is not a burial.

In the daytime, at the stopping-places, at the relief and medical points, they:

—conceal their corpses,

fearing that they may be delayed by formalities:

—and remain behind!

They carry out the corpses from the forest where they have spent the night and bring them to the road.

They must bury them in a place where the people pass by.

—Where man coming past, will cross himself and pray for the soul of the departed. For you see, the dead have not had their due singing and prayers as at a proper funeral service.

The feeling for beauty dwelling in the souls of these people who, at home, dress themselves so wonderfully, expresses itself involuntarily, sub-consciously:

—In the choice of the burial-place.

Just as the feeling for beauty in the soul of the Russian people instinctively expressed itself in the past, in the choice of beautiful places for the erection of their monasteries.

All the cemeteries:

—are in beautiful places.

Some of them, earlier in the day, have looked out a beautiful little hill.

Some, a picturesque ravine,

Some, a spot under a canopy of foliage.

But certainly:

—A beautiful spot:

All these orphan cemeteries are painfully beautiful.

The graves are fashioned with love.

Everywhere carefully heaped and evenly moulded mounds.

Often a little fencing around them.

Or the grave has been covered with pine branches.

Or the wind trembles upon a lonely branch that has been planted in the earth.

On the crosses have been tied embroidered belts, or clean white towels with deeply embroidered ends have been swathed around them.

There are inscriptions on the graves:

—This province, that town district, this survey, that village.

They bury them:

—The best they can,

and go on farther, leaving behind them the sort of graves one only sees in dreams.

On some graves "God's blessing."

Ikons of the Mother of God.

In boxes or frames.

Other ikons than that of the Mother of God I did not see.

None.

They are ikons:

—Of "She who intercedes."

And pitifully She looks out, the Woman of Suffering. From the graves, upon the river of human affliction streaming past.

On other graves are Roman Catholic ikons, paper pictures pasted on to wood.

Also only the Mother of God.

Wearing the crown, with the cleft heart, which the swords have pierced.

There are Orthodox and Catholic graves side by side and together.

Hundreds of thousands of beggared

people go past, and of course no one touches an ikon or its setting, or an ikon box or the embroidered towel waving in the wind.

I stop at one collection of graves, at a second, at a third.

There are some which breathe horror.

Three, five, crosses, and on all:

—The 17th of September.[1]

—The 17th of September.

—The 17th of September.

In one day, all. In one night a cemetery grew up.

The majority are indicated by an inscription on one cross:

—Such and such a day of August.

On another:

—Such and such a day of September.

Somebody has been buried.

Others see:

[1] This is old style. According to our calendar it would be the 30th of September.

—That it is a nice place.

And lay their own dead with the others, side by side.

And yet more come, and yet more. And the cemetery grows, stretching itself out along the margin of the road.

And one reads the heart-breaking inscriptions on the crosses:

—Infant.

—Infant.

—Infant.

Yes, truly, it is the province of Mogilef.[1]

Every three, every five versts,—and then every two versts, and every verst, —crosses, crosses, crosses.

A continuous cemetery.

And between these crosses, and amongst the lowering smoke of forest bonfires and clouds of dust come on, come on, without end come on grey carts and people, like grey visions.

[1] "Mogila" is Russian for a grave.

With uninterrupted hooting, tinkling, and whistling, the relief cars come along, making their way through the dense crowd going in the opposite direction.

Going for fugitives, going with fugitives.

Every car in Roslavl is being used for the carting of the fugitives.

They gather on the road the sick, the tired-out, horseless ones, the people going on foot; they pick up the children, the orphaned, the lonely.

Those who are riding on worn-out, hardly moving horses.

They give a push from behind when there's a hill to be climbed.

Some Grodno people are going forward slowly and wearily on oxen.

They try not to get separated from one another, but are failing.

Grodno people, Holm people, Lublin people, Lomzha people.

How many there are on the road!

All have gone.

Here comes a cunningly contrived house on wheels.

The owner has either taken an entire wash-house, or has built one and put it on wheels,—and now a pair of horses is drawing it.

Through the open door you can see the people sitting on a wooden form, just as if at home.

Singing.

Some Polish women are carrying, on wooden stands, large pictures of the Mother of God, all in dark ribbons, hung with branches of evergreen, adorned with withered flowers.

They carry the ikons the whole road, hundreds of versts, in the hands.

They go forwards as if seeing nothing in front of them.

As if they felt no tiredness whatever.

In a sort of unbroken ecstasy.

As if they were going to heaven.

And, never ceasing, loudly they sing.

They do not complain, but give praise.

There arises a voluminous cloud of white dust, that you cannot see through.

The sort of cloud that a herd of cattle will raise, and of herds, only a herd of sheep.

The shadows of sheep, but not sheep.

Wasted, Skeletons.

—What do you make of the sheep?

—Bought by the Government.

—Where do you drive them from?

—From Lublin province itself.

—How many?

—There were fifteen hundred, but three hundred have died by the way.

In the villages the peasant women stand with armfuls of white bread, which are baked here in *saiki*.[1]

[1] *Saiki*, that is, in layers, as we might bake large rolls in England, a dozen or so together.

—One can buy something nice for the children's mouths.

But the peasant women complain:

—A bad trade. No one buys. A ruined people.

They sell the sort which is called "nourishing," the half-white.

Coming to a hamlet, I ask a Jewess, who is standing at a corner with a bread-tray:

—How much is your black bread?

—Four copecks a pound. It is not black, but it is good.

A characteristic answer in these parts.

Some of the fugitives are not accustomed to black bread, and complain that because of it:

—The stomach gets out of order.

Beyond Propoisk we come to what is probably the most sober place on earth, a melancholy beggared hamlet where, who should drink?—there live only Jews.

Beyond Propoisk I meet a band of war prisoners.

Amid the grey-blue uniforms of the Austrians are a few luckless Germans with red edging to their hats.

They sit on a bank at the side of the road and look on with curiosity at the fugitives who for their part are not interested in them or in anything that they see.

The officers seem to be all very young, and judging from their appearance, must have been students before the war; several of them wear spectacles. They are seated in carts.

We meet further bands of prisoners below Dovsk and below Kief.

Here and near Dovsk the prisoners are from the German side, near Kief they are from the southern, the Austrian.

—What differences!

I don't know if it's an accident.

But the Austrian prisoners from the German front are fine-looking men, and smartly attired.

Near Kief we meet:

—A miserable lot.

Boys, and to judge by the sound condition of their boots, only lately taken for soldiers, and they are clad in women's jackets and wrapped about with worn-out peasant kerchiefs.

—When one detachment of prisoners was stopped for some reason or other, and afterwards were ordered to catch up, on the run—they did not run like soldiers.

Out of twenty only one held his head high, raised his elbows, and ran in the proper way.

The remainder ran in a disorderly fashion, panting, and waving their arms wildly

In the way that we call:

—Coming in time from the plough.

The first impression, perhaps an accidental one, was this:

—That to the German front they send the Austrians of the first class, the picked troops of Austria.

The eyes had just rested on this new picture, and then once more they fell upon the endless stream of grey carts.

And the crosses, the crosses, along the length of the road.

See, they have brought from a village camp a newly joinered coffin, quickly put together by the village carpenter.

An open cart moves slowly along the middle of the road.

The horse with suffering pain-full eyes steps forward slowly with uncertain strides.

Just staggering.

Will fall in a minute.

Wavering also, as smoke in the wind, goes the attendant peasant beside his

horse, and his eyes have that glassy look which seems to express nothing whatever.

In the open cart, with folded arms, with pinched nose, lies the corpse.

And the wax-like yellow face looks sternly toward the sky.

Beside the corpse, just by the head, is a child looking forth from its rags.

As if this was not merely a going, but:

—A procession.

And in this procession is something painfully touching and majestic.

On the left-hand side of the road lies the carcase of a horse.

Its purple half-eaten side reddens in the sun.

At our approach several dogs with blood-dripping mouths leap away from the horse, barking.

The way they go seems strange. As if they were not dogs.

They have the appearance of wolves.

How quickly in Nature every animal becomes wilder!

Let but blood be tasted.

See, once more come people from the village, one carrying a coffin lid, two others a coffin, and they run to overtake their cart.

Another dead horse and another lot of dogs.

Overhead fly black clouds of ravens, cawing and calling.

What is this?

The picture of the retreat of the "great army?"

Yes, of the great agricultural army.

And with what, and how, shall we pay for it?

VII

AT THE CROSS-ROADS

DOVSK is a large village. Here the high-road divides into two, one branch goes to Kief, the other to Moscow.

Here the river of fugitives flows off in two directions.

One takes the direct way to Roslavl, the other turns to the right for Kief.

Which means that after Dovsk the fugitives will be even thicker on the road.

Dovsk is a memorial to the Emperor Alexander II., with a great white wall around it, and around the wall is a camp of peasant carts.

At a turn on the Kief road a great new

cemetery of new white crosses lies concealed.

Dovsk will long live in the memory of the fugitives.

Such a cemetery we have not yet met upon the road.

—But what's that! say the fugitives,—now near Baranovitchi there *is* a cemetery, at Novi Puti, on the road to Slutsk.

At Baranovitchi perished the weakest.

Every one remembers Baranovitchi with terror.

When we passed Baranovitchi it was still hot.

There was a terrible thirst.

The water of the wells had been scooped even to the bottom.

They let down boys with the buckets, and the boys got the last of the dirty water and were hoisted up.

The fugitives ate nothing but potatoes and cucumbers.

—We dug up the potatoes whilst they were green.

The potatoes were not boiled, but were made hot in dirty water in pots put at the edge of bonfires.

They ate half-raw potatoes and cucumbers.

—To-day he ate, to-morrow he was gone!

The fugitives are always saying this:

—That's why I'm safe and sound to-day. I ate no potatoes.

—I was hungry, but I did not eat.

—All those who ate, died.

—I, *pan*,[1] ran after the children all the time and didn't let them out of my sight. Just so as they shouldn't take anything to eat from neighbours.

Is it possible to die here? *There* they died,—say the strongest, those who have gone through it all.

[1] Polish for Sir or Master.

We pass through Rogachef, a little town overwhelmed with fugitives, with the dust, and with the smell of the bonfires burning in the camps around.

Rogachef is like a little white building, like a prison built on the high and beautiful bank of the Dnieper.

All the meadow-land beneath is alight with bonfires, bonfires, bonfires, and flocking with fugitives.

Here also is an exit for the great river.

The railway,—and a portion of the people find a place here:

Na mashinu, on the train.

That means that ahead, the river is even thicker.

—The fugitives eat us up, says Rogachef, trembling.

In this town also you can buy nothing.

There's no small change.

In the chemist's shop where I go to buy

benzine, the public is given "*kvitki*, money-tickets."

—Ninety copecks change. There are the tickets. Sit down and wait a little whilst we deal with other customers.

—The fugitives will eat us up, wails Rogachef, as the other towns and villages wail also.

VIII

BOBRUISK

AND behold, we are in the province of Minsk.

Look, over there is where it began.

We go along the high-road at a foot-pace, as if in a town amid heavy traffic.

They are driving cattle along the road.

They drive the cattle here also, and sell them at the "points" to make soup for refugees.

The hungry cows blunder among the carts, and put up their forefeet on to the backs of them in order to pull out hay.

Cattle, relief cars, stray horses wandering about by themselves, peasant

women, road menders, police, soldiers,—all in one great mass.

And dust, dust like a wall.

Dust in which nothing is seen.

In which you travel as in smoke, as in a dense fog.

And when we drove out at last on the shore of the River Berezina, tortured, overwhelmed by all that we had seen, suffocating with dust, from the heat of the road,—I for the first time since Rogachef, took a full breath.

And down below, on the lower shore, look where you would, there burned in the setting twilight and kindled redder and more red—bonfires.

And a multitude of carts over the extent of which you could not throw the eyes.

Bobruisk—that is the first stopping-place where the oncoming crowds of people stumble under the burden of the Cross.

Here for the first time on the road, the first of the exhausted:

—Deprive themselves of the last thing.

Cease to be "muzhiks."

Give up their horses.

And take their seats:

—*Na mashinu*, on the train.

They carry them away.

And in their place come on like a continuous wall, newer and ever newer hordes.

And overwhelmed Bobruisk trembles in terror.

—They suffocate us.

—What will happen to us?

Whatever will become of these people?

IX

ALONG THE KIEF ROAD

WHEN on the homeward road from Bobruisk I turned to the right at Dovsk by the refugees' cemetery and came on the Kief highway I broke away from the grey confused river, and it was as if I had wakened after a nightmare.

A clean, free road lay ahead.

I was going round the fugitives.

The whole of Lublin and Lomzha provinces going south.

Formerly I should have said that there were many.

Now, after what I have seen below Bobruisk it seems as if:

—There were none at all.

In the province of Mogilef, the potato country, as the farmers call it, hundreds of women are working in long rows hurriedly digging up potatoes.

—How the price for women's labour has gone up—says a peasant in one of the villages. They're wanted on the big farms. The potatoes must be dug, quickly, hurriedly, before the refugees flood over the ground.

In the Province of Cherneegof it is warm.

In the shade there is a little ice on the pools.

But it even bakes a little in the sun.

The poplar trees are still beautiful pyramids of green.

—The cypresses of Little Russia.

Doves in hundreds circle over the fields and bathe in the transparent atmosphere, in the blue of the brilliant cloudless sky.

They turn, and the whole flock of birds

glimmers and trembles white in the sunlight.

As if someone had scattered down a bundle of slips of paper.

And they turn and circle and dance, some going from side to side, others remaining at one point and hovering on their grey wings.

It is quieter than ever in the village.

It is interesting to speak with the village lads.

Boys of twelve or thirteen hold themselves seriously and solidly and importantly.

They look like muzhiks.

They say:

—We've got into a good position.

They grieve for the high prices which have to be paid for labour, for women's labour.

—And you've worked much yourselves?

—Have we not?

—A boy has taken the place of a man.

The village has silently, silently, accomplished a great work—it has provided the army and us with bread.

At Cherneegof, when I went out for an evening walk along the boulevard adorned with antique cannon, I saw far away below the town the campfires on the meadows, on the banks of the Desna.

And continuously, all the way to Kief, stretches the provinces of Lomzha and Lublin on the road.

And to meet them come forward other fugitives.

The same grey figures in the same grey carts.

As if a uniform had been found for the fugitive.

—Where are you from?

—From the province of Volhynia.

Northern provinces tend southward, the southern, for some reason, northward.

Oh that Russian lack of system!

In Kief I was held three days.

And I thought:

—I will rest my eyes till Dovsk. And then once more the grey river, the nightmare.

But that was not my lot.

At Brovari, Kozelets,—three verstsalong the high-road, stand mounted sentries.

That gives to the entry to the town an uncommonly important aspect.

—What's the matter? Are they expecting the approach of the Governor?

—Not at all. The fugitives.

And ahead, at all the little towns and villages, we came on the sentries standing outside.

—In order that the fugitives might not be delayed in the towns and villages, but pass on.

As the corpse of a drowned man floats downstream.

And on the shore stand peasants who push off the corpse from the land, make gestures, and cry out:

—Not for us. Float farther.

From Dovsk the main stream of the fugitives gushed forward, not towards Roslavl, but along the Kief highway.

And at the same moment, beyond Gomel, there moves forward to meet them just such a cloud of homeless ones as moved over the forests of Mogilef.

Roslavl has choked.

They have determined to send no more there.

The river has been turned southward at Dovsk.

And on that road nothing has been prepared.

Neither relief points where food is given out, nor medical help for the failing.

X

ALONG THE OLD ROAD

AT Dovsk a block took place.

Around the statue of Alexander II. was an immense collection of fugitives' carts.

Two thirds were moving to the south towards Kief.

One third was going toward Roslavl.

They are building barracks in Dovsk.

Only on the eighteenth of October are they beginning to build barracks.

During the week, since I passed last along this road, all has changed.

In the south it is still warm, but here it is cold.

The morning frosts have changed everything.

The forests have become clear, and it has become light in them.

The birch trees stand like dark skeletons.

The ground under them is a golden carpet of leaves.

There is work going on on the road.

People are working and Nature is working.

Near Cherikof they are building barracks.

On the nineteenth of October they are building barracks.

At twenty-five versts from Cherikof they are building barracks.

At the first post station after Roslavl.

At the post station of Sophiskaya they are building barracks.

In the province of Kaluga they are building barracks.

It is the twentieth of October, and all the same they are only building barracks!

Formerly, all the way from Roslavl to Moscow there were not crosses along the road.

Now they glimmer, they stretch on.

They have stretched to the twenty-eighth verst.

New ones, only just planed.

They have grown up here in one week.

Whilst they were building barracks.

XI

HELP

THE Society of "Northern-Help" works very energetically.

The Municipal Alliance has given over a number of its points to the superintendence of Poles.

And they have done well.

The great majority of the fugitives speak Russian badly.

They understand nothing.

But at the relief stations people speak Polish with them.

The Poles work in a business-like fashion.

They know the ways of the people.

At the relief points where the Russians are working, I ask:

—What are you cooking?

—*Borshtch.*[1] *Shtchee.*[2] Soup.

But the Poles are cooking Polish dishes.

—We cook as they cook for the labourers on the large farms, explains a Polish official, simply.

And the fugitives from Polish provinces like these relief points better.

At the relief points they give:

—According to the certificates.

It is necessary to show the certificate of the head man of the village:

—In such and such a family so many souls; so many grown-ups, so many children.

—And if the certificate is wanting?

A young Polish sister in a white ker-

[1] *Borshtch* is a soup made from beetroot, tomato, beef, etc.

[2] *Shtchee*, the well-known Russian cabbage soup.

chief and leather jacket answers—We also give, even when there's no certificate.

There are no better words on such an occasion, in human tongue.

At the relief points all is arranged well and economically.

They wage war on the contractors.

Disease gives birth to parasites.

The village prepares black bread quite honestly.

But near the relief points have sprung up contractors.

The local:

—Enterprising people.

In the matter of supplying white bread:

—For children and sick persons.

And you will only hear one thing said, wherever you go:

—Half-baked bread again.

—I shall refuse that contractor after this.

—And will another turn out to be better?

And the position of the fugitives is hopeless.

At the relief points they:

—Complain.

The flood of people is such that they do not succeed in making sufficient soup.

They frequently have to give out soup that has not been properly boiled.

And the people get ill.

Or they give out provisions to the fugitives when the latter have no means of cooking them.

Only the means of heating them at the bonfire-side, eating them half-raw, and getting ill.

Though you give out money there is nowhere and nothing to buy.

All is dear, nothing within reach.

All along this way of affliction, in the

villages and on the high-road, you may see white notices displayed:

—Hay for fugitives.

—Oats.

At seven pounds a horse.

—Wood for fugitives.

—Milk for children.

—Boiled water for fugitives.

—Boiling water for fugitives.

—Tea for fugitives.

—Food relief point.

—Medical point.

—Isolation point.

All is at the disposal of the fugitives.

But go into the medical point and you will find:

—That of medicine to stop dysentery there is none whatever.

Or go into the tea shop and they will tell you:

—The fugitives give the sugar to their children as a treat. So to prevent this

we boil the sugar with the tea. It is better than that they should drink unboiled water.

Businesslike.

But the next establishment of that kind is sixty versts off.

Once in three days a man is able to drink sweet tea.

A great help!

You stop at a place where a notice hangs out.

—Milk for children.

The woman doctor is fairly off her feet with work.

—You give milk to children?

—Only to children.

—And how much milk do you receive per day?

—A bucket and a half.

You approach another milk point a hundred versts farther on.

—You give out milk?

—No. We boil semolina pudding. In milk half and half with water.

—How much milk do you receive in a day?

—Two buckets.

Truly:

—A drop of milk.

XII

HOW THE RIVER FLOWS

IN the overwhelmed, over frightened, trembling little towns and villages —they will tell you:

—There is no order whatever! No system, no plan.

That is not so.

That is how it seems in an immense war.

At each separate point it is difficult to catch the general plan.

And only if you make the whole journey of "The Way of the Cross" will you see that here is both plan and system.

Even an iron system.

The general principle is that:

—The railways being so overburdened,

the fugitives be forced to go as far as they can with their own horses.

And along the road, to lead off the stream in various directions and to diminish it.

To Bobruisk they all go in carts.

At Bobruisk there is the first diversion.

A portion of the fugitives is sent off by rail.

The stream is diminished.

At Rogachef another railroad crosses the way, and at Rogachef there is another diversion.

Another portion of the fugitives is given places.

—*Na mashinu.* On the train.

At Dovsk the direction of the stream is regulated.

It is let loose upon Roslavl.

Roslavl being choked, a dam is formed there and from Dovsk the main stream

is set going towards Gomel, Cherneegof, and Kief.

At Roslavl the greatest diversion takes place.

Here the majority sell their horses, and the railway takes them off by a round-about route to the eastern provinces of Russia, avoiding Moscow.

Those who can still go on with their horses beyond Roslavl turn into the province of Kaluga.

Where they wander and are absorbed.

The province of Moscow receives only the tiniest streams, the little drops of this mighty:

—Bitter river.

XIII

CONCLUSION

WE are by no means a cruel people. But dreadfully cruel things happen in our country.

We can make penal servitude into hell, and life into penal servitude.

All thanks to our inability to take measures in time.

The tendency to delay.

To delay fatally.

Always, and in everything.

It had been decided in the face of the astonishing invasion of the enemy to leave for him a desert.

That is the business of the war-chiefs.

Our business, the business of the rear,

was to organize the reception of these millions of people who have been deprived of everything in order that the enemy may be beaten.

Obviously the movement of the fugitives from their villages did not begin yesterday. It is the ninth, the tenth week:

—That they have been on the road.

It is the fourth month since they started,—and only now in the province of Mogilef:

—Are they building barracks.

This elemental movement

Was more than human strength could manage.

To save all from disease was impossible.

But we could have discounted this movement.

Could have reckoned:

—When and where the fugitives would be.

The distance such and such. A horse in a day can do so much.

This is a "train problem," the sort that pupils in the first class in school work out and solve.

Four months ago we could have reckoned that in the month of October the fugitives would be in the province of Mogilef.

Petrograd is too much occupied with politics.

It blames society in general for this.

—Profiting by a difficult moment in affairs, Society has thrown itself into politics.

Excuse me.

In a difficult moment our society has shown itself in the place where Russian society has always shown itself in moments difficult for the State and for the people.

Public organizations have set them-

selves to work for the fugitives, as in the past they have set themselves to work in time of famine or of epidemics.

Each at his post.

Wherever there is suffering.

North-west, South-west, a whole wall of our house has fallen in, and public organizations have come in and softened the blow.

But Petrograd has occupied itself with politics.

—Is there not too much Liberalism in the programme of the "Progressive Blok." Won't the Liberals take the lead?

And whilst Petrograd was resolving these great questions, the sea of fugitives flooded and still flooded Russia.

At the moment when they began to take measures the sea had already flooded everywhere.

And they began to build barracks when the road was starred with white crosses.

The movement of the fugitives along the great "Way of the Cross" is one of affliction and calm.

It is calmer than one could ever have expected.

But there are three reasons why this great calamity is passing without tumult.

The first is:

—The work of our public organizations.

Though it may be only half, yet they have fed the fugitives.

The second:

—The gentle autumn.

After all, it is not so cold as it might be.

And what is more—there has been no muddy season.

How would these poor worn-out horses ever have pulled themselves out of the mud if the heavens had poured forth?

And the third reason:

—Sobriety.

Great and holy sobriety.

That which saves Russia in a year of unprecedented trial.

A measure inspired by the very God Himself of the Russian land.

No one can give drink to these unhappy people. How they would have drunk, if only to get rid of their grief, to get rid of the remembrance of what they had lost; farms, wives, children.

That's how it would have been.

But thanks to sobriety this great unhappy people, afflictedly, calmly, with the calm of martyrs, makes its grievous:

—Way of the Cross.

The following equivalents of Russian terms may be helpful:

A copeck: the Russian farthing.

A rouble: before the war worth two shillings and a penny, now worth about one shilling and seven pence.

A pood: thirty-six English pounds.

A verst: about two thirds of a mile.

An arshin: 28 inches.

Izba: a peasant's cottage.

[Editor.]

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